



## Eighth Sunday of Luke 10:25-37 – 14 Nov 2021 – Tone 4

*Teacher, what shall I do...?*

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind..."*

It is because we don't love God with all our heart that we cannot know who our neighbour is. Those who know who their neighbour is, they've already loved Him and so His grace does not leave them without knowledge. Have we ever really experienced within our heart the mercy of God? Where does it take us?

It is because we don't love God with all our soul that we see diminished value in the life of the neighbour. If we stumble along the way, we start seeing a life without value around us where life is given to us in abundance. Have we ever marveled at being fully alive and close to the One who brings all things into being? He doesn't give only our life, but also the life of our neighbor to marvel at while being filled with awe. By delighting in God our souls recognize each other in a mystery without end that only joy can comprehend.

It is because we don't love God with all our strength that we cannot cross the road and the gulf that separates us from our neighbour; from our hell to the bosom of the other. Those who had the strength to behold Christ looking at us from the cross with open eyes, receiving their forgiveness for what we've done to Him, became powerful enough to touch the hand of the neighbour and not to remain in debt forever and paralyzed in their sins.

It is because we don't love God with all our mind that we allow evil thoughts to make us pass by on the other side by becoming judgemental. The attention to all the insignificant details of vanity today makes us neglect the reality that begs us for our presence. The reality of being that has body and soul. The neglect that leads to the death of the sinner.

The neighbour is the one that is neglected by others, unseen by others, the one whose life has no value. The suffering of the other that makes us think of death becomes a stumbling block for those who walk on the path of vanity. This is our neighbour. The neighbour is the one who needs my direct attention because it receives none from others. The way I act is going to decide if he is worth living or dying, because the others have already inflicted on him the suggestion that his life is worthless. The parable here tells us the Truth that compassion is more powerful than the neglect brought about by sin and it can bring a half dead man back to life. This is the truth that the research studies, when looking at the effects of abuse in our life, forget to mention. There is remedy even when death has become obvious and it writes the narrative of the story.

The neighbour is the lowly suffering soul that has become forgotten within the misery of life, that does not hide himself behind the bush being naked and a victim of other people's sins, but comes our way to bring about the certitude of compassion that is hidden in our heart. All of us have preferences on how our neighbour should be looking. God doesn't. The neighbour is not the one who is attended by many or for whom social services fight in order to increase their numbers for more funding. He is not represented by the amount of meals we served or the amount of hours we were open, but rather by how much we were able to break the abandonment of the other, to approach and to touch his suffering with hope.

A case study of ***"men sentenced to death; weak ...and homeless"*** (St. Paul's First Letter today)

We all want to care for the youth. Who doesn't? Take a picture with a child in need and you have written a funding story right there. We thought, after the pandemic, that we should do something more for the young people. To integrate them more in the life of the mission, more precisely on Saturdays. They write to us that

they want to help the poor. So why don't we listen to them? Strangely enough, on Friday, E. said she wanted to talk to me about youth suffering today. Nobody listens to them, she said. She was still very emotional after talking to an 18 year old girl that morning, who was homeless and in shock after who knows what had happened to her on the street that night. E. talked to her, sharing her pain and her name. It was hard to attend to her and to know what to do. She was trying to sleep, but she was in terror. She was sobbing in her sleep every 5 minutes, and crying with us, not being able to understand how sick she was. E. promised her early in the morning that she would come back to talk to her. She came, but we decided to call an ambulance. I don't know if we did the right thing. I've seen situations in the past when the hospital helped people, connecting them with what they needed and situations when they discharged them in their own vulnerability, in the same situation as they came or even worse. Our innkeeper today, the one who is paid to do this job, is gambling for us. It's hard to know what their understanding of help is, when they don't really see quality in many people's lives that come to their doors. Our young girl on Friday looked the same as the man in the story, with no clothes, looking lost, trying to sleep, trying to forget the trauma of the previous night. "You see," says E. "when we talk now about the story in the bible (it was our meeting for the gospel of the coming Sunday) I am thinking about her. I feel that I failed her. I promised her to come back. She told me her name and now she is gone." But like in the story, I said to her, we entrusted her to the innkeeper, which is the hospital. I didn't know if keeping her with us, not knowing how sick she was, was the right thing to do. She looked more scared than sick, E. replied. I don't think they will help her with that at the hospital. She needed somebody to look after her.

This was not the first experience of traumatised children this week. On Wednesday, we held a memorial service for a 19 year old who died of an overdose, with her young friends looking with despair for a place where they can share their sorrow so it does not consume whatever was left from their souls. A friend found them and brought them to the mission. Praying for them in the chapel somehow connected all of us, still here or departed, with God. The week did not end before finding out about a personal story of another young girl struggling with addictions on the street and a 5 year old who lost his mother because of the addictions she struggled with. The last story we heard from the mother herself, who shared in tears with us how much God did for her while struggling to come back to life. She wants to come back and work at the mission and be grateful for the hope she receives while losing what she loved the most.

When we think today about losing our children from church, we forget what we are losing them to. We lose them to drugs, sickness, to social abandonment and so on. When we look for them, we look at universities and other high class institutions. I think, if they are successful already, they did it without us (even though I am terrified of what success looks like lately). However, those who are not successful started to integrate within our community more naturally, some would say. But who would have thought that a successful program for the young generation today would be a memorial service.

The youth today who are homeless, sick, more dead than alive are, according to the Holy apostle Paul, those who bring to us a message from God. If we could just take time and listen because : ***Their voice has gone out into all the earth (Prokeimenon)***. So we don't look for false images and make idols for ourselves out of institutions that consume more of their souls and our attention.

Do not miss during the Nativity Fast: Psalms on Tuesday night (7:30 pm); Bridges on Wednesday Night (6:30pm); Liturgy on Friday mornings (7:00 am)

If you want to be creative with fasting please talk to Fr Nicolaie to see what is good for you this year.